

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) An apparatus for coagulating tissue, comprising:

an electrode adapted to produce a high-frequency current;

a gas-delivering device having an outlet and being adapted to deliver an inert gas from said outlet into a space defined between said electrode and said tissue, such that a plasma is produced between said electrode and said tissue when said high-frequency current is applied to said inert gas, wherein a distal end of said electrode projects out of said gas-delivering device; and

a guiding device comprised of an electrically insulating material and disposed at said distal end of said electrode, said guiding device for directing and guiding said plasma such that at least a part of said plasma is diverted in a predetermined direction,

wherein a cross-section of at least a portion of said guiding device is at least a size of said outlet in order to divert said plasma into said space substantially radially with respect to said outlet of said gas-delivering device, ~~and~~

wherein the electrode is configured such that it may be retracted and pushed forward with respect to the gas-delivering device; and

wherein only the electrode and the guiding device, and no other portion, of the apparatus extend past the outlet of the gas-delivering device.

Claim 2. (Canceled)

3. (Previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said guiding device is comprised of a thermally stable material.

Claims 4-5. (Canceled)

6. (Previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said guiding device has a concave configuration on a side thereof that faces said outlet.

7. (Previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said guiding device has a contour which prevents mechanical damage if said guiding device touches said tissue.

8. (Previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said electrode is movable relative to said outlet such that when said electrode is moved into a retracted position said guiding device closes said outlet in a substantially leakproof manner.

9. (Currently amended) An apparatus for argon-plasma coagulating tissue, comprising:

a gas-delivering device;

an electrode disposed substantially coaxially with the gas-delivering device and configured to generate a high-frequency current, wherein a distal end of the electrode projects outward through an outlet of the gas-delivering device; and

a guiding device disposed at the distal end of the electrode, wherein the guiding device is configured for guiding a plasma stream exiting the gas-delivering device, the plasma stream being produced when said high-frequency current is applied to an inert gas delivered by the gas-delivering device,

wherein the guiding device is comprised of a material that is electrically insulating and thermally stable,

wherein the guiding device is disposed in an axially symmetric manner around the distal end of the electrode and a cross-section of at least a portion of said guiding device is at least a size of said outlet of the gas-delivering device in order to divert the plasma stream into a surrounding space substantially radially with respect to the outlet of the gas delivering device, and

wherein the electrode is configured such that it may be retracted and pushed forward with respect to the gas-delivering device; and

wherein only the electrode and the guiding device, and no other portion, of the apparatus extend past the outlet of the gas-delivering device.

Claims 10-11. (Canceled)

12. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the guiding device is shaped such that damage to the tissue is prevented if the guiding device touches the tissue.

13. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the guiding device is spherical.

14. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the guiding device comprises a concave surface at a surface facing the outlet of the gas-delivering device and a flattened surface at a surface facing the outlet of the gas-delivering device and wherein a transitional region between the concave surface and the flattened surface has a rounded contour.

15. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the guiding device comprises a concave surface at a surface facing the outlet of the gas-delivering device and a substantially hemispherical surface at a surface facing away from the outlet of the gas-delivering device.

Claim 16. (Canceled)

17. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 9, wherein when the electrode is in a fully retracted state, the guiding device is seated on the outlet of the gas-delivering device.

Claim 18. (Canceled)

19. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the guiding device is comprised of a ceramic.

20. (Currently amended) An argon plasma coagulating probe assembly comprising:
a tube;

an electrode disposed substantially coaxially with the tube and configured to generate a high-frequency current, wherein a distal end of the electrode projects outward through an outlet of the tube; and

a guiding device disposed at the distal end of the electrode, wherein the guiding device is configured for guiding an inert gas stream delivered from said outlet of the tube, wherein a cross-section of at least a portion of said guiding device is at least a size of said outlet in order to divert said inert gas stream substantially radially with respect to said outlet of said gas-delivering device;

wherein the guiding device is comprised of an electrically insulating and thermally stable material and is configured to have a concave configuration on a side thereof that faces the outlet and is further configured to prevent mechanical damage if the guiding device touches the tissue, and

wherein said electrode is movable relative to said outlet such that when said electrode is moved into a retracted position said guiding device closes said outlet in a substantially leakproof manner; and

wherein only the electrode and guiding device, and no other portion, of the argon plasma coagulating probe assembly extend past the outlet of the gas-delivering device.

21. (Previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 7, wherein said guiding device has a rounded contour.

22. (Previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the cross-section of at least a portion of said guiding device is larger than the size of said outlet.